



RED POWER

IN CANADA

An Eastern Indian  
design denoting the  
unity of the tribes

by dieke fidler

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by way of an introduction

# Condition of the Indians

Canada's native Indian population numbers around 500,000 — about half of them (237,490 in 1968) living on more than 2,000 reserves, and the remainder outside direct federal government jurisdiction and the provisions of the Indian Act. In addition, there are 350,000 mixed-blood Metis. The total Indian population in the United States is roughly similar, a little more than half a million, with an additional several hundred thousand Indians out on their own, more or less assimilated. Thus, Canada's Indian population is nearly ten times greater than the American as a percentage of total population.

The vast majority of native Indian people suffer incredible, soul-breaking poverty. The government's Hawthorn-Tremblay study, published in 1967, found that of a sample survey of over 22,000 families in Indian communities across Canada, 74 percent made less than \$2,000 in 1964; 47 percent made less than \$1,000 a year. (Remember, those are family incomes.) Over half the Indian population is chronically unemployed: the survey reported that 61 percent of the workers held jobs less than 6 months per year; 23.6 percent for less than two months. The Indian unemployment rate is 10 times the national average.

As a result, more than one-third of the households in the Hawthorn-Tremblay survey depended for their livelihood on meager welfare grants from the Indian Affairs Branch — and this figure doesn't account for the large number of bands providing their own welfare funds. The federal government allots about 25 percent of its Indian affairs budget to welfare payments, as against the 10 percent it devotes to "economic development" on the reserves.

Most government services are either non-existent or of scandalously poor quality. Total spending of the Indian Affairs Branch averages out to \$530 per treaty Indian, a year (1967); whereas the federal government spends \$740 a year on the average non-Indian Canadian, not to speak of the provincial and municipal government services (e.g. education, health, agriculture, roads, etc.) which our quarter-million treaty Indians do not have access to.



Nine out of 10 Indian homes on reserves have no indoor toilets; barely half have electricity; nearly 60 percent live in houses of three rooms or less.

It is estimated that more than 30 percent of the inmates in Canada's jails and training schools are Indian, although Indians account for less than three percent of the total population. The number of Indians in federal penitentiaries has increased five-fold since 1950 to more than 2,500.

While the average Canadian can expect to live to the age of 62, the Indians' life expectancy is only 33 for men, 34 for women. The mortality rate among Indians increased by eight percent between 1965 and 1968 alone. The mortality rate among Indian pre-school children is eight times the national average.

Yet Indians are the fastest growing ethnic group in Canada, with an annual population increase of five percent. Half the Indian population is under the age of 16, close to twice the proportion among non-Indians.

This phenomenal population increase, combined with rapidly declining job opportunities for Indian workers — half of whom are engaged in relatively traditional and marginal economic activities like fishing, trapping, hunting, and agriculture — means a tremendous pressure on the Indians to leave the reserves and head for the cities in search of work.

In Manitoba, for example, about half of the province's 80,000 Indians and 30,000 Metis are now subsisting in substandard conditions in Winnipeg; 10,000 have migrated to the city during the last 10 years, most of them in the last three years. But in the cities, the employment prospect is scarcely better than on the reserves. Only three percent of Winnipeg's inhabitants, the Indians and Metis account for 12 percent of its welfare cases.



# RED POWER IN CANADA

*by dick fidler*

## The Developing Movement

Indians in Quebec recently reminded the provincial government that it had failed to sign treaties with them for all of northern Quebec, and that the time had come for a settlement. They claim 85 percent of the province's territory, and have put a price tag of \$5 billion on it.

Mohawk Indians from the St. Regis reservation near Cornwall, Ont. recently sat in to block the U.S.-Canadian border crossing. They demanded that the Canadian government recognize the Jay Treaty, signed in the late 18th century between Britain and the United States, which gave Indians the right as sovereign peoples to transport goods across the border free of duty.

The leaders of the 9,000 Indians in the Six Nations Confederacy at Brantford, Ont. have petitioned the United Nations in support of their claim that the Confederacy is a sovereign state, and suggested that Ottawa begin paying rent — including back rent — for its use of land guaranteed to the Indians by treaty with the British crown and never formally revoked. An adequate settlement, they say, might be in the neighborhood of \$2 billion.

In Saskatchewan, the Native Action Committee, which seeks local control of government in Metis and Indian communities, ran an independent Red Power candidate, 23-year-old, Carole Lavallee in

Meadow Lake constituency in the 1968 federal election.

U.S. Sioux leader Vine Deloria, Jr., in a speech in Montreal this month, called for a "mutual defense pact between U.S. and Canadian Indians against the white man."

The ideas and tactics of the Red Power movement are inspired in part by the developing movements of oppressed peoples around the world — and in particular the Vietnamese, the U.S. Blacks and the Quebecois. But its roots are to be found in the terribly exploited and oppressed conditions of the Native people right here in Canada, and the growing determination of these half-million original inhabitants of this continent, nearly crushed by literally centuries of colonization, degradation and white "civilization's" attempts to destroy them, to resist the cultural genocide which is staring them in the face. It is these "New Indians" — led by articulate, militant young spokesmen like Harold Cardinal, an Alberta Cree — who are opening up a new, inspiring, and revolutionary chapter in Indian history.

Cardinal's book, *The Unjust Society*, has received attention because it is the most detailed presentation yet published of the Indian side of the story and because it is an eloquent, damning and comprehensive indictment of the Trudeau government's new Indian policy.



That policy was expressed in a "white paper" released by Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chretien last June, which projected phasing out the Indian Affairs department over the next five years, thereby leaving Canada's quarter-million treaty Indians presently covered by federal services at the mercy of the provinces, many of which do not provide such services.

Harold Cardinal and other Indian spokesmen — who have unanimously condemned the plan — describe it as a blueprint for cultural genocide. They are not exaggerating. It is difficult to imagine any other motivation behind the white paper's proposals than the complete destruction of the Indians as a people.

The white paper's starting point is a complete dismissal of the treaties which have been the formal basis of relations between half the Indian population and the government for well over half a century. Trudeau brushed the treaties aside as an "anomaly" not to be tolerated in the Just Society. "It is inconceivable," he said, "that one section of a society should have a treaty with another section of a society..." They should become Canadians as all other Canadians."

But for the Indians, the treaties are the means by which the whites legitimized in the eyes of the world their presence in the Indians' country. They were negotiated between sovereign peoples, and have great symbolic importance to the Indians. The Indians have never denied that the written terms of the treaties are often misleading; verbal promises (and there were no doubt many on the part of the crafty whites) are omitted; "they carry key phrases that are not precise";

"they state that certain things were ceded that, in actual fact, were never considered so granted by the Indians who signed the treaties." (Cardinal)

But many treaties did make wide-ranging promises which, if interpreted in the light of present-day needs and the Indians' understanding when they were signed, would encompass a vast expansion in government services and the economic status of the Indian people. These include full protection of hunting, trapping and fishing rights, the right of education (while free, it is of such abysmal quality and so unrelated to the cultural traditions and needs of Indians that only 200 Indian youth go to university each year,) provision for full medical services (a reference to the government's duty to provide a medicine chest could, Indians justly argue, be interpreted today to mean free comprehensive medicare) and protection of the Indians' land and encouragement of their future economic development on the reserves.

The government, of course, has instead chosen to give the treaties the narrowest possible interpretation, holding the Indians to the strict letter of their written terms, and wherever there is doubt, unilaterally and arbitrarily deciding in the interests of the white capitalist system. An example is mineral rights, where Indians whose ancestors thought they were surrendering surface rights only, have been deprived in many instances of rich royalties from new subsurface mineral finds under their lands, while the giant oil and mining monopolies reap huge profits and the white man's government rakes in the taxes.

But the legal documentation that really governs the Indian fate today is not the treaties, which the government considers irrelevant, but the Indian Act as it has developed this century, an Act which once and for all legalized the colonial-like subordination of the Indians to the federal rule. For example, it gives the Minister of Indian Affairs the sole discretionary power to authorize the use of reserve land for schools, hospitals and other projects and to disallow any bylaws enacted by the band; it places the finances of the reserves almost exclusively under the control of the Department and provides the Indians with no protection against laws enacted by the

**On self-determination —** " ... Most Indians firmly believe their identity is tied up with treaty and aboriginal rights. . . No genuine Indian participation in the white world can be expected until the Indian is accepted by himself and by the non-Indian as an Indian person, with an Indian identity."

from The Unjust Society

by Harold Cardinal



federal parliament.

The Act is the legal foundation for the huge<sup>12th</sup> bureaucratic apparatus that has grown up to maintain the Indians in a primitive state of abject dependency on the federal government. This bureaucracy is huge, and incredibly inefficient — for example, by 1967, department spending averaged out to \$3,180 a year for a family of six, but the average income of Indian families across Canada was only half that amount.

What have the Indians received in return?

A glance at the conditions listed elsewhere on this page gives some idea.

But worse even than the physical poverty, terrible as that is, is the complete denial of the Indians' most precious asset — their self-identity as Indians — by the Ottawa mandarins and their patronizing local agents. Even the legal definition of an Indian is up for grabs, thanks to the government's cynical distinction between legal and non-legal Indians. A treaty or "registered" (legal) Indian can enfranchise, thereby getting citizenship, the vote, liquor, but he loses his treaty or aboriginal rights, his right to share in the reserve's communal lands — in short, the one thing that above all defines him as an Indian.

The purely arbitrary, even cruel implications of this distinction reveal just how clearly it is designed to frustrate Indian self-definition and cultural identity. To cite only one example: If an Indian woman marries a non-Indian, she automatically forfeits her claim to be an Indian. But, if a non-Indian woman marries a treaty or registered Indian, she becomes a legal Indian, regardless of her color (although her children will not necessarily be Indians — a further complication.)

The constant humiliation of the Indian, designed to make him ashamed of his origins, his culture, language, and history, of course is particularly blatant in the educational system and is eloquently documented by Harold Cardinal from his bitter personal experience.

Even the narrowest provisions of the treaties have been violated continually by the government. The courts have overruled longstanding exemptions of Indians from white men's laws restricting

hunting, fishing and international customs duties. Treaty promises by the white conquerors to encourage economic development of Indian lands have been entirely ignored.

On the Trudeau government's "White Paper" — "... a program which offers nothing better than cultural genocide... extermination through assimilation." "In attempting to remove all constitutional protection for Indians, the government is attempting to eliminate unilaterally, once and for all, its obligations under the treaties as understood by Indians."

from The Unjust Society

by Harold Cardinal

And thus the Indian people find themselves confined in a deepening vicious circle of poverty, unemployment and welfare payments. Forced by an expanding birth rate and declining economic perspectives on the reserves to emigrate to the cities, they form there a growing subproletariat, more or less permanently unemployed, or grossly underpaid, totally unaccepted by white society.

The consistently high rate of unemployment among the Indians — about one-third of the total number of those listed as looking for work in Canada — is shocking evidence of how totally unable capitalism is to absorb this "reserve army of labor" into its economic structures.

But white capitalist society's rejection of the Indian is no less equalled by the Indian's rejection of all the attempts of the system to smash his identity. Today, it is precisely those young Indians who have been most subjected to the influences of the white world — its cities, its educational system, its culture — who are moving out in the vanguard of the struggles to organize their people. And the developing spirit of militancy is strongest among those Indians who have managed to some small degree to move in the white man's world, without giving up their sense of identity as Indians: the high steel workers of Caughnawaga, Quebec, the industrial workers of Brantford, the farmers and reserve ranchers of Alberta. These "new Indians" are the front line



soldiers in the growing battle by Indians to determine their own future.

"The work of creating stable and representative organizations has been one of the most difficult challenges faced by our people," writes Harold Cardinal. He relates how the government attempted to bar every step of the way, provoking and exploiting differences between treaty and non-treaty Indians, preventing use of band council monies for organizing efforts, creating its own organizations dominated by "good" (pro-government) Indians (Uncle Tomahawks), pumping funds into white dominated groups, even trying to

coopt the developing leadership through establishment of its own "community development" programs (which are quickly dropped whenever the Indians show any inclination to use them.) But a major breakthrough occurred in July of last year, when the National Indian Brotherhood was founded, the first such representative body controlled by Indians for Indians.

The NIB is now drafting its counter-Indian Act, based on the principle of self-determination, for the Native people, which it will present to Ottawa sometime this year.

# *Indian Control of the*

The following is the program of the Native Alliance for Red Power (NARP), a West Coast Native organization established two years ago. It was published in the third issue of the NARP Newsletter, Jan.-Feb. 1969. It presents a succinct summary of the main demands of the growing Red Power movement, in the words of the Indian people themselves.

\* \* \*

1. We will not be free until we are able to **determine our own destiny**. Therefore, we want power to determine the destiny of our reservations and communities. **Gaining power in our reservations and communities**, and power over our lives will entail the abolishment of the "Indian Act," and the **destruction of the colonial office** (Indian Affairs Branch).
2. This racist government has robbed, cheated and brutalized us, and is responsible for the deaths of untold numbers of our people. We feel under no obligation to support this government in the form of **taxation**. Therefore, we want an end to the collection of money from us in the form of taxes.
3. The history of Canada was written by the oppressors, the invaders of this land. Their lies are perpetrated in the **educational system** of today. By failing to expose the true history of this decadent Canadian society, the schools facilitate our continued oppression. Therefore, we want an education that teaches us our true history and exposes the racist values of this society.
4. In this country, Indian and Metis represent three percent of the population, yet we constitute approximately 60 percent of the inmates in prisons and jails. Therefore, we want an immediate end to the unjust arrests and harassment of our people by the racist police.
5. When brought before the **courts** of this country, the redman cannot hope to get a fair hearing from white judges, jurors and court officials. Therefore, we want natives to be tried by a jury of people chosen from



# Toward Nationhood

What does the future hold for Canada's half-million Indians? This question — usually ignored by the countless articles and books now appearing on the "Indian question," most of which don't go much beyond moralizing on the terrible poverty of the Native people — strikes at the root of

the Indians' dilemma. Can the Indians, descendants of a Stone Age people uprooted and almost exterminated by the capitalist colonization of North America, ever find acceptance as equals with whites in a modern industrial society? And if so, how?

## *Indian Communities*

native communities or people of their racial heritage. Also, we want freedom for those of our brothers and sisters now being unjustly held in the prisons of this country.

6. The treaties pertaining to fishing, hunting, trapping and property rights and special privileges have been broken by this government. In some cases, our people did not engage in treaties with the government and have not been compensated for their loss of land. Therefore, for those of our people we want fair compensation. Also, we want the government to honor the statutes, as laid down in these treaties, as being supreme and not to be infringed upon by any legislation whatsoever.

7. The large industrial companies and corporations that have raped the natural resources of this country are responsible, along with their government, for the extermination of the resources upon which we depend for food, clothing and shelter. Therefore, we want an immediate end to this exploitation, and compensation from these thieves. We want the government to give foreign aid to the areas comprising the Indian Nation, so that we can start desperately needed programs concerning housing, agricultural and industrial cooperatives. We want to develop our remaining resources in the interests of the redman, not in the interests of the white corporate elite.

8. The white power structure has used every possible method to destroy our spirit, and the will to resist. They have divided us into status and non-status, American and Canadian, Metis and Indian. We are fully aware of their "divide and rule" tactic, and its effect on our people.

**RED POWER IS THE SPIRIT TO RESIST.**

**RED POWER IS PRIDE IN WHAT WE ARE.**

**RED POWER IS LOVE FOR OUR PEOPLE.**

**RED POWER IS OUR COMING TOGETHER TO FIGHT FOR LIBERATION.**

**RED POWER IS NOW!**



The prevailing view among Canada's ruling circles is clear: the Indians must assimilate. They must, as Prime Minister Trudeau put it recently, "become Canadians as all other Canadians." His government's aptly named "white paper" which projects the outright abolition of Indian treaty rights within five years spells this out in more detail. At the same time, this society every day reveals how unwilling and unable it is to "assimilate" the Indians. Even when destroyed as a people, they are completely rejected as individuals, the unemployed, underpaid victims of racism.

The essence of the white paper is the proposal to remove Indian lands from the protection against alienation now contained in the Indian Act provisions. Not only does this close the door to attempts to encourage economic development of the reserves, it is the prelude to a massive land grab of these six million acres, much of it choice land near the cities, by real estate speculators and industrial consortiums.

South of the border, where Indians lost 90 million of their 140 million acres through local land grabs following the Allotment Act of 1887 (which was supposed to give them land), and still more during the "Termination policy" of the 1950s and early '60s, they are less hypocritical about it now. A headline on the cover of a recent issue of the National Review cynically states the extreme right-wing position: "Did the United States destroy the Indians? No, but it should have."

A growing number of Indians — and all Indian leaders — reject out of hand this fatalistic perspective. Self-help and self-definition, expressed in the remarkable revival of interest among young Indians in their tribal origins, languages, customs, history, even religious traditions — in short, whatever distinguishes them as Indians from the dominant, exploiting racist white capitalist culture — are the keystones of the growing movement for Red Power. Every demand, every struggle of the Indians to assert their rights, refutes the lying image of the lazy, shiftless Indian inculcated in our children — white and Indian — by this racist society, beginning with John Wayne's exploits on TV's late, late show.

The basic program being developed by

the new Indian leadership is summarized in the demands of the Native Alliance for Red Power, reprinted here. It is a program with revolutionary implications because it poses a direct challenge to the natural drive of capitalist society to suppress, absorb or cast aside every national minority or nationality within its borders.

But the Canadian left is by no means unanimous in its appreciation of this dynamic of the Red Power movement. For example, at the recent founding conference of the Ontario NDP left wing, the "Waffle" group, some participants argued against singling out Indians and Franco-Ontarians as significant "minorities" worth including along with women, students, tenants unions, etc., as powerful potential allies of the organized working class in the struggle for socialism. Surely the vastly more numerous Italian-Canadians and other immigrant groups are "minorities" with greater potential influence, they objected.

Forgotten here was a vital distinction between ethnic minorities like the immigrants who generally have a clearly assimilationist orientation toward the Anglo-Saxon cultural majority in English Canada insofar as it has been able to absorb them, and relatively oppressed national minorities like the French and Indians who are defining themselves in opposition to this society's cultural and other values.

But, some socialists might object, surely you are not saying that the Indians constitute a "nation"? Don't they lack the normal attributes of a nation as it is commonly understood? They have no common territory, no common language, no distinct viable economic life, and their cultural and historical traditions, while picturesque, have little relevance to a complex industrial society. Or so the argument goes...

Regardless of this or that formal criterion, the key question is how the Indians see themselves — their collective consciousness. In this sense, the Indians are evolving, from a race to a nationality... to a nation, in much the same way that the Black people or the Chicanos in the United States may be said to constitute a nation, a nation without territory. Moreover, the Indians can be said to possess to some



degree all of the formal criteria of a nation, too, beginning with a territory. It is precisely their deep attachment to their lands that has enabled the Indians to resist destruction so far. These lands, recognized by treaty, include 2,000 reserves on six million acres across Canada. Much of this land is marginal, undeveloped, largely uncultivable, and useful mainly for the traditional pursuits of hunting, trapping and fishing.

But much of it is very valuable. In British Columbia, a multi-million dollar shopping center stands on land leased from the Squamish band of West and North Vancouver, while in Kamloops, Indians hired a firm of business consultants to draw up a plan for developing their 32,800 acre reserve, and created their own industrial estate.

The shocking fact about the Indians' reserve lands is that no one has ever done a comprehensive survey of their economic viability — least of all the government, which is concerned mainly with dispersing the Indians out of the reserves. The government's Hawthorn-Tremblay report, the most exhaustive study of Canada's Indians so far, concluded only that an economic survey was necessary, while maintaining that development of the reserves and Indian communities is "distinctly secondary" to "massive efforts" to move Indians off the reserves and into the cities. Even available funds for development have not been disbursed; last year the staff of the Ontario government's Indian Development Branch quit because, out of the million dollars the province had earmarked for Indian projects, only a fraction had been spent and many self-help projects had been refused financial aid by the government. Of the federal Indian Affairs Department's \$62 million budget in a recent year, only \$1.5 million was spent on economic development. Because title to the reserves is vested in the government, the Indians cannot arrange bank loans in their own name; but Indians charge that the government fails to back loans for industrial and commercial development of the reserves. An unidentified former top official of the Branch was quoted in the *Globe and Mail*, Oct. 21, 1967:

"As a rule the economic development programs that the Branch supports are the

marginal, low-profit enterprises like freshwater fish cooperatives. They're useful, but it was my experience that whenever anyone proposed that the Indians themselves run some larger enterprise — such as building their own resort community instead of leasing to a developer, or organizing a company to exploit their own oil and gas resources — the idea was dismissed, because of fear that established companies would put on pressures against so-called unfair competition from the Indians, backed by the government.

"Indian band capital funds totalling \$30 million are on deposit in Ottawa. Oil and gas alone on Indian reserves is estimated to total \$2 billion.

"How is it that such rich people are so poor? Why can't Crown corporations or commercial corporations be set up, primarily under Indian control but with expert outside help, to exploit these resources? Why can't the Indians hire their own management talent?"

The official is merely echoing a key demand raised by Red Power militants — for economic development of the reserves by the Indians themselves, or "foreign aid" as they put it. Harold Cardinal says: "What the Indian wants is really quite simple. He wants the chance to develop the resources available to him on his own homeland, the reserve. . . . (This) includes financial assistance. . . training in the precise skills he will need to develop the resources. . . access to expert advice and counsel. . . Indian involvement. Our people want the right to set their own goals, determine their own priorities, create and stimulate their own opportunities and development."

What this means is that, in effect, the Indians do indeed possess a major attribute of most nations, their own territory, much of it bordering established industrial areas of the country. And most important, an increasing number of Indians see their future as a people linked with the fate of these reserves. Despite the massive migration in recent years into the cities and the terrible poverty of the reserves, very few treaty Indians — only 600 a year — voluntarily opt out of legal Indian status. And 500 of these are women who, by a blatantly discriminatory provision of the Indian Act, automatically lose treaty status when they marry outsiders.



# A New Commonwealth

The reserves play a key role in the development of national consciousness among Canada's Native peoples. As the homeland for the quarter-million treaty Indians, they have provided an economic base to sustain the Indian population, most often in traditional non-industrial pursuits of hunting, fishing and trapping. Without such lands, their fate would have been even worse, as the situation of the Metis and non-treaty Indians today so grimly testifies.

Equally important, the reserve lands are now providing a base for the new organizations that the Indians are forging themselves in their struggle for self-determination, and it is around the reserves that their program of Indian control of Indian communities naturally centers.

The declining economic perspectives of the present reserve lands, combined with a rapidly accelerating birth rate, are forcing more and more Indians to leave the reserves and head for the cities in search of work. In the United States, where the land was stolen from the Indians or exhausted earlier, about half the Native population is estimated to live in urban areas; in Canada, about one-quarter of the treaty Indians covered by the Hawthorn-Tremblay survey of 1967 had left the reserves.

However, very few abandon treaty status, their right to return to and live on the reserves. And while urban ghettos and the immense problems faced by the racially oppressed and super-exploited Indian population of cities like Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Vancouver will no doubt figure more prominently in the Red Power program as it develops, it is clear that so long as the economic, social and cultural base of the Indians remains on the reserves — which generally are located in longstanding tribal communities — the key demands will continue to be expressed in terms of the reserve communities.

This demand of the Indians for control of their own communities has tremendous

progressive significance.

It is of course a democratic demand, and as its widespread appearance among Indian tribes from coast to coast indicates, it is deeply rooted in the life and struggles of the Indian masses. But it is also profoundly revolutionary, for it poses directly the question of who will have the decision-making power among the most oppressed, colonized people on this continent — and what those decisions will be.

In its most general sense, the concept of community control takes the form of the demand that the treaties be reinstated by the federal government, then renegotiated between the government and the indigenous Indian organizations and sovereign tribal councils to take account of modern conditions. In addition, since half the Indians and none of the up to 350,000 mixed-blood Metis have any treaty rights, the Red Power militants demand compensation for the lands they lost. Many tribes note that since they were never defeated in war and never surrendered their land by treaty, they retain legal rights to vast areas of territory, particularly in British Columbia and Quebec.

A growing number of Indian communities are already renewing their claims to sovereignty — and acting on them, by rejecting further incursions on their territories and violations of their treaty rights by the white man's racist government. A notable example was the St. Regis reserve's protest against the Canadian government's refusal to recognize the Jay Treaty's provision for Indian exemption from border-crossing levies.

Another example of possibly greater significance is the declaration of sovereignty issued by the Six Nations Confederacy at Brantford, Ontario following Indian Affairs Minister Jean Chrétien's "white paper" policy statement last June. Of the estimated 9,000 Indians on the Six Nations reserve, Chief Logan says "at least three-quarters want an independent state."



A variation on this theme was the Saskatchewan Native Action Committee's presentation during the 1968 federal election of a candidate, 23-year-old Carole Lavallée, in the constituency of Meadow Lake, where 60 percent of the population is Indian and Métis. She ran on a program centered around "local control of government in Métis and Indian communities." New Democratic Party militants should take note that this strong Indian-Métis organization, under the militant leadership of Dr. Howard Adams, apparently did not consider the NDP, which also contested the riding, an adequate vehicle for their needs and program.

Lavallée's vote — 600, or 3 percent of the total — seems small until it is compared with the percentage of the Native population that actually voted, 10 percent. When the two figures are transposed, it appears that close to half the Native electorate who voted cast their ballots for a self-proclaimed Red Power candidate!

Small wonder that Ottawa refuses to grant self-government to the North-West Territories, where Indians and Eskimos together constitute over 60 percent of the population!

The electoral strategy conducted in Meadow Lake is rejected by many Indians, particularly treaty Indians, today. Although the latter have now been given the vote federally and in most provinces, the growing opposition to government authority is reflected in the feeling that participation in the white man's elections constitutes a surrender of Indian sovereignty. The lack of participation of the Indian voter, even when he or she is confronted with a real alternative, is evident in the Meadow Lake statistics, already cited. But this abstentionism extends also to elections within the reservations for bodies set up by Ottawa, such as the band councils. Mohawk leader Kahn-Tineta Horn told the Toronto Star in December, 1968 that only 450 of Caughnawaga's 2,500 eligible voters had taken part in the recent federal-government sponsored elections there. The low turnout reflected opposition, not apathy, she said.

The Indians have not yet spelled out how they see the formal application of their

demand for political sovereignty over their communities. NDP leader T.C. Douglas has suggested the reserves might be given municipal status. This is already being done with one Band council in British Columbia, as part of the projected transfer of Indian Affairs to the province, and at Moosenee, Ontario. But rather than increase Indian control of their own

What the Indians want — "What the Indian wants is really quite simple. He wants the chance to develop the resources available to him on his own homeland, the reserve."

from The Unjust Society

by Harold Cardinal

communities, it merely transfers federal authority to the province, which retains control over municipal law. It certainly does not guarantee self-government; at Moosenee, which the Robarts Tory government calls "Canada's first self-governing Indian area," the board which runs the town was appointed by Queen's Park, and the Indians, who form 90 percent of the local population, do not have a majority voice on the board!

What the Red Power movement is already making very clear, however, is the content of the demand for community control. They want their own police, their own juries, their own courts, their own laws which correspond to their way of life, to their moral and social standards. In a recent brief to the Senate committee on the media, Indian leaders demanded funds for their own radio network and TV stations in areas with a large Indian population.

Indian women, subjected to shocking degradation at the hands of the white colonizers particularly because of the pre-eminent role they played in the matriarchal Indian communal society, are now organizing independently within the Indian community and formulating their own demands. The Caughnawaga reserve women petitioned the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, calling for an end to the Indian Act provision that can



"deprive an Indian woman of her nationality."

Key struggles are shaping up over Indian demands for control of their own schools. Half the 64,000 reserve Indian children now attend integrated schools,

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"Our confederacy was a democracy and a matriarchal society in which the woman had superior status to the man, unlike the white man's world. The hereditary chiefs were elected by the clan mothers, leaders of family groups within the tribes, and could be deposed by them..."

— Chief Joseph Logan of the Brantford, Ont. Six Nations Confederacy

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many of them hundreds of miles from the reserves, in white communities, and the government proposes to eliminate Indian-only schools altogether. But Indian spokesmen across Canada are demanding an end to church and state control of their children's education, and raising such demands as an Indian university, rewriting of the texts to tell the truth about the Indians' history, teaching of Indian languages and instruction of other subjects in the Indian languages. In short, they are demanding "Red studies" programs similar to the "Black studies" demanded by broad layers of the Black community in the United States.

Clearly, then, in their territorial possessions, their economic and social objectives, their organizational development and political demands, and their cultural pursuits, the Indian people are taking on the major characteristics that Marxists have normally attributed to a nation.

When the Indian looks back for inspiration to early aboriginal society in North America, he discovers the ideals and moral standards of a naive yet effective communism. Indian society, as it

existed and as it is being resurrected by today's young Red Power militants, is a society totally at odds with the "capitalist ethic."

"American Indians," a writer south of the border noted recently, "remain our one unhyphenated minority. The American Indian world is so alien to us, so alien still, after all the generations of mortal embrace, that no one would say Indian-Americans any more than one would say Martian-Americans. It is an alienness rooted in the very foundation of the Indian world, which rests — still today — on a sense of community as against the foundation of individual contention, individual acquisition, underlying the surrounding world — an alienness attuned to a harmony of human relationships rather than a harmony of commerce and industry, attuned to belonging rather than belongings."

Similarly, Walter Currie, president of the Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada, is quoted in the CLC's Canadian Labor as contrasting the "Indian way of life" — "he took only what he needed. He had no need either to command or to obey another's wishes. Time and work had not been invented; acquisition of property was unknown. Group interest was paramount to self interest" — with what he calls the "peasant ethos" of the European: "competition for the acquisition of private property ... his command over others ..."

These characteristics of Indian culture are very attractive to young people revolting against the hypocrisy and false values of capitalist society. Women's liberation activists can deepen their understanding of the class character of their oppression as women by studying the matriarchal communism of Indian tribal society.

These Indian ideals have striking relevance to the Red Power struggle, too. When the Indian people assert that they will no longer accept domination by the white man's government, that they want full control over all aspects of their life, they are indicating that they have abandoned any illusions about achieving equality under capitalism. Moreover, the Indian's traditions show the possibility of a different kind of society based on fundamentally noncapitalist concepts. The movement for self-determination is an



increasingly powerful phenomenon among minority nations and nationalities in all the industrialized capitalist countries today — we see it also in Quebec — but what other national people can point to such obvious examples of communal cooperation and equality in its own traditions?

These factors make the Indians powerful potential allies of all other forces struggling for change on this continent. Already red and black militants have expressed their solidarity in common actions — for example, a joint meeting in Toronto to honor the martyred Black leader, Malcolm X.

The struggle of the Indian people for emancipation is an expression of the permanent revolution. It has begun as a struggle for sovereignty, for collective or national liberation. But the scope of the problem, and the nature of the enemy mean that it can't be achieved except through an all-out struggle against the entire capitalist system. Thus the Red Power movement inexorably tends to

merge with the broader class struggle against capitalist domination. The Indian people are destined to play a leading role in the fight for socialism in Canada; for they truly have "nothing to lose."

White capitalist society has been unable to coopt this movement to its own purposes, to break down the solidarity of the Indian communities, their collective approach to solving common problems. The Indian people are developing the determination and ability not only to control their own communities, but to make those communities examples of a higher form of social organization than what we know today under a system based on private property. Who can predict what lessons we can learn in the power and effectiveness of communal development from the collectivist experiments of the Indian communities? By showing white workers the image of their own future, the Red Power movement can do much to popularize and concretize what socialists mean when they talk of a society founded not on avarice but on human solidarity and brotherhood.

**On the National Indian Brotherhood** — "For many, the brotherhood represents the final attempt by Indians to try to solve their problems within the context of the political system of our country. If it fails, and particularly if it is destroyed by the federal government, then the future holds very little hope for the Indian unless he attempts to solve his problems by taking the dangerous and explosive path travelled by the black militants of the United States."

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